

OF X
Long Life and Old Age.

A
Funeral Sermon,

Occasion'd by the

D E A T H

OF

The much Honour'd,
Mrs. Jane Papillon,

Who departed this Life,

July 12th, 1698. Ætat. 72.

By John Shower.

L O N D O N,

Printed for J. Fawcner, at the Talbot on
London-bridge, 1698.

776

TO THE HONORABLE SENATE OF THE MASSACHUSETTS
IN SENATE,
JANUARY 18, 1850.
THOMAS P. BENTON, Esq.
of the State of Missouri,
has the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your
favorable notice of the Report of the
Commissioners of the State of Missouri,
and to express his sincere regret that he
has not been able to attend to the
choice of a report to the Senate.
He will not, Sir, regret that
the Report, that I should have
the honor to acknowledge of your
Commissioners, after the manner
of the

To the much Honour'd,

Thomas Papillon, Esq;

THE following Sermon was
Preach'd, and is now Pub-
lish'd at your Desire. Your near
Relation to the Extraordinary
Person Deceas'd, and that which
I have the Honour to bear to
You, doth manifestly determine my
Choice to whom to Address it.

You will not, Sir, expect in
this Epistle, that I should give
the World an Account of Your
Eminent Qualities, after the man-

The Epistle Dedicatory.

ner of Modern Dedications. The Aversion I ought to have for Flattery, and that which You have of any thing that looks like being Flatter'd, besides the Censoriousness of this nice Age, (which will not bear the Praises even of those who very well deserve 'em,) make this Point so tender to be touched, that I dare not adventure to draw Your Character. However, if Your Children and Grand-Children, following the Worthy Examples of their Parents, in great part are, and the Rest like to be, Excellent Examples unto Others; that, Sir,

The Epistle Dedicatory.

is a living Panegyrick upon You,
which You cannot escape.

Upon the like Reason, I have p98
said so very little of the Deceased.
Your positive Prohibition not
suffering me, to do her that Ju-
stice which the Audience expect-
ed. I should otherwise have
mentioned her Exemplary Piety
and Devotion; the great Mode-
ration of Her Principles and
Temper; Her Concern at Heart
for the Division among Prote-
stants; Her strict Observation of
the Lord's Day, in Publick, and
Family Worship; Her extraor-
dinary Care to take a frequent
Account of the State of her Soul,
and

The Epistle Dedicatory.

and of her Progress towards Perfection; Her Love to all Good Men, of whatsoever Denomination; Her Prudent Administrations at Home, and her disinterested Charity Abroad; (a Charity not confin'd to a Party, measur'd only by the Merit and Necessity of the Objects.) And to her Honour, I should have taken Notice of the Wise and Successful Education of her Children; and the great Regard she had to the regular Behaviour of her Servants; on whom she endeavour'd to leave some lasting Impressions of Religion.

In

The Epistle Dedicatory.

In short, I would have declar'd, that she had discharg'd the Duties of every Relation, as a Wife, Mother, Mistress, Friend, Neighbour, &c. in that manner, as perhaps there have been few such Examples of Piety and Prudence, in our Age. In not doing this, I observed Your Orders; which I ought to mention, as a just Excuse for that Defect in my Sermon.

Dear Sir, May all the Blessings of an Holy and Honourable Old Age, which I have named, be long Yours! May it please God, to satisfie You with long Life,

The Epistle Dedicatory.

**Life, and afterward shew You
his Salvation ! *This is the
Hearty Prayer, of***

S I R,

**London, *Nov.*
the 3d. 1698.**

Your Affectionate,

Obliged Nephew,

and Humble Servant,

John Shower.

A

A
Funeral Sermon,
OF
Long Life and Old Age.

JOB V. 26.
*Thou shalt come to thy Grave in
a full Age, like as a shock of
Corn cometh in his Season.*

TH O' Eliphaz was mistaken
in the Application of his
Discourse unto Job, whom he sup-
posed to have been very wicked,
B because

because of his great Afflictions, yet what he delivers in this Chapter of the Punishment of Evil-doers, and of the Divine Favour to Good Men, is a most certain and undoubted Truth. He assures us it was that which he had well considered, and found it to be confirmed by Experience ; and therefore fit to be believ'd and remember'd, v. 27. *Lo this, we have searched it, so it is, hear it ; and know thou it for thy good.* Now what is it, that he thus ascertains the Truth of ? But the Promise of God's Kindness and Favour to Good Men. In the foregoing Verses he mentions several that have been fulfilled to the Person, and Family of our deceased Friend: As, To deliver and save them in Six and Seven Troubles, v. 19.
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To supply and defend them in a time of Danger : To protect them, though incompassed with Enemies, v. 20, 21. That wherever they go, they shall have a watchful Providence over them for Good : That in what part of the World soever they pitch their Tent, they shall find it in safety ; *their Tabernacle shall be in Peace,* (they shall return to it, and visit it, it may be after some Years absence,) *and shall not sin,* v. 24. And then it follows, their Posterity shall be great and numerous ; *their Offspring shall flourish as the Grass,* and be considerable for their Number and Condition, v. 25. And then as the close of all, in the Text, that they shall be saved from a violent and untimely Death ; they shall be carried to their Graves in
B 2 Peace,

Peace, as Corn into the Barn, when 'tis fully ripe, and fit to be gathered. *Thou shalt come to thy Grave in a full Age, as a shock of Corn cometh in his season.*

The End of a Good Man's Life is here described, two ways.

First, Properly, *Thou shalt come to thy Grave in a full Age.* Secondly, Metaphorically, *like as a shock of Corn cometh in his season.* It is plainly implied and supposed, That the best Servants of God, however favour'd in this World, and who live the longest; yet at length they must come to the Grave : However God may protect and prosper them for many Years on Earth, they are not to be Immortal here. But as that is imply'd, so there is also asserted and promised, that the manner
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and Season of their Death shall be kind and gracious ; they shall dye in Peace ; they shall have a Grave and Burial : and this after a long Life, in a full Age, when fitted for the other World, as a shock of Corn fully ripe is fit for the Barn. Accordingly we may observe these Four Particulars from this Passage.

- I. That the best Servants of God, who have lived in his Favour for many Years, must come to the Grave at last.
- II. That it is a Mercy to a Good Man to dye in Peace, so as to have a Grave and Burial.

B 3 III. That

III. That to live to old Age, to come to the Grave in a full Age, is a promised Blessing. Since the ordinary Age of Man is set to *Threescore and Ten*, the Excellent Person deceased, (who dyed at *Threescore and Twelve*) may well be accounted to come to her Grave in a full Age ; especially if we apply the Similitude of the Text , like a shock of Corn ripe for the Harvest ; and understand it of one fitted by the Grace of God for the blessed World : Which will afford a Fourth Particular ; viz.

IV. That Old Age with the Grace of God, and serious Religion to ripen and fit the Soul for the Heavenly State,
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is a singular Honour and Favour of God. This last I principally design to discourse of; and more briefly of the former.

I. That the best Servants of God, however favour'd and prosperous for many Years in this World, must at last come to the Grave. This is one of those Things we need not prove; but it would be of great Advantage to consider it. *Dye we must*, as Men, whose Souls dwell in such Earthly Tabernacles, it is unavoidable: And as Sinners, we are under a Sentence of Death, by a Divine Constitution and Appointment. Which is a Kindness unto Good Men; who cannot else have their promised Rest and Crown, by the

full Accomplishment of their Desires and Hopes. They can't be perfectly freed from Evil, nor partakers of compleat Felicity, without Dying. The Capacity of our Nature, the Improvements we may attain to, and the admirable Means which God hath appointed to fit us for a nobler Life, may easily convince us that he hath prepared another State, and Life, and World; which it is now our Business to provide for.

It were well if the best Christians would consider it more, to make them diligent to improve this Life, wisely to imploy their Talents, and carefully to do all the Good they can, before the Night comes. And it were well if others would consider it, who are related to them; who have
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Opportunity to converse with them ; and are capable of receiving Good by them ; if they would consider, that such Useful Excellent Persons are not to stay always with us. If you that are Younger should have many Years longer to stay ; your most valuable Friends, who are advanc'd in Age, must shortly be gone.

And let All seriously count upon it, that 'tis but a little while and every one of us shall be call'd away. The oldest Man or Woman, the longest Liver that we read of, did not reach that which, in comparison with God's Eternity, is called *one Day*, did not live a Thousand Years. *Methuselah* is the longest Liver upon Record ; and yet 'tis a much longer Time since he dyed, than that was
which

which he liv'd. Before the Flood they liv'd nine or ten times as long as now we do, yet all dyed. *Enos* 905 Years, *Seth* 912, *Adam* 930, *Jared* 962, *Methuselah* 969, yet all dyed : They who tarried longest on the Stage, were at length called off. *Moses* speaks of the ordinary Duration of the Life of Man to be Seventy Years, and reckons it a great matter if any attain to Fourscore ; as now and then there are Instances of some that do, yet is the Strength of their Years but Labour and Sorrow. But because *Moses* himself was Fourscore Years old when God made him a Captain, and *Aaron* Eighty Three before he was made High Priest, we may not conclude the Age of Eighty, at that time, to be a very decrepit old Age : Therefore the
Account

Account given by * *Moses* may rather be understood, either to refer to after Ages, or to the particular Case of the Children of *I/rael* in the Wilderness: where multitudes were destroyed for their Murmuring and Unbelief; so that in Forty Years time, all the Males of Twenty Years old and upwards, that were able to go forth to War, were cut off, except *Caleb* and *Joshua*. The number of such as dyed under the Age of Eighty must be reckoned very great, at least Three Hundred Thousand Men.

But the longest Life of Man, absolutely and in it self consider'd, is very short. Once in a Hundred Years the Scene of the World is shifted, and all the Actors go

* See *Dr. Hammond* on Psalm XC.

off the Stage, and others come in their room. And how soon and suddenly are Individuals called away? There is hardly any thing that is weak and withered, that is vanishing and of no continuance, that is movable and may be taken down at pleasure; but the Life of Man is compar'd to it: To a Vapour: To the Flower of the Field: To a Tabernacle: To a Shepherd's Tent: To a Shadow, &c. And in comparison with several other Creatures, it is also short; for we read of divers Animals that liv'd sometimes thrice as long as Man ordinarily hath done: How little at longest is the measure of our Days, that may be reckon'd up by one Figure and a Cypher? What is this to Everlasting Life? The Life to come will

will continue more Millions of Ages, than there are Moments now in the longest Life of Man; yea, if it were Ten Thousand times longer than *Methuselah's*. The present Life is to the future but as *one Moment*, in the Apostle's Reckoning, *2 Cor. 4. 17.* And 'tis shorter yet, if compar'd with God's Eternal Duration, which hath neither Beginning nor End. *Mine Age is as nothing before thee, Psal. 39. 5. and Psal. 90. 4.* There is no Proportion between the greatest number of Years and an endless Life.

How certainly, how soon will the little number of the Days of the Years of our Pilgrimage be ended? Though we should be favour'd by Divine Providence more than others; and flourish in outward

ward Prosperity to a great Old Age ; yet *what Man is he that liveth and shall not see Death*, let him live never so long, and never so well ? *Shall he deliver his Soul from the hand of the Grave ?* Psal. 89. 49. Jacob was an 130 Years old when he said to *Pharoah*, Few and Evil have the Days of the Years of my Life been ; and yet that time was short in comparison of the longer Lives of his Fathers : But unconceivably shorter in comparison of the Everlasting Life, which this is the passage to. I have read of certain little Beasts, on the Banks of the River *Hypanis* in *Poland*, that never live above a Day ; they which dye at Eight a Clock in the Morning, dye in their Youth ; they which dye at Five in the Evening of the same Day, in their extreme Old

Old Age. Who would put so small a Continuance into the Consideration of Good or Evil? And yet the longest of our abode in this World, in comparison with Eternity, is much less than the Life of one of those Creatures compar'd with *Methuselah*.

II. *It is a Mercy to dye in Peace, so as to have a Grave and Burial.* To dye in Peace, is sometimes opposed to an untimely, violent Death, *1 Kings 2. 6.* It was promised to *Zedekiah*, that he should not dye by the Sword; but dye in Peace, *Jer. 34. 4.* To do so, and to be decently Interr'd, is an additional Mercy, which the best Men have desir'd and been concern'd for. We read that *Abraham* purchased a Burying-place for his Dead. God
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incourag'd *Jacob*, by the Promise that his Son should take care of his Funeral. And God expressed his Kindness to *Moses*, in that particular, that he buried him. And *Joseph of Arimathea*, is commended for his Care in the Burial of our Saviour. And 'tis threatned and inflicted as a Judgment, to want a Sepulchre. As in the Case of *Baasha*, and *Jezabel*, *Jehojachim*, and others, *Jer.* 22. 19. *Psal.* 143. 11. It is threatned to this purpose, *Jer.* 14. 16. That the People should be cast out in the Streets, and none to bury them; and that the Bones of the Kings, and Priests, and Prophets, should be taken out of the Grave, and laid open to the Sun and Moon. 'Tis part of a very sad Complaint, *Psal.* 79. 2. The dead Bodies of thy Servants have they given to be meat unto the Fowls of the
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the Heaven, the Flesh of thy Saints unto the Beasts of the Earth. Their Blood have they shed like Water round about Jerusalem ; and there was none to bury them. The Romanists have been often very Barbarous and Inhumane to our Protestant Brethren in this particular, by prohibiting their Burial, and ill treating their dead Bodies, and digging up their Bones, &c.

And yet we should not make too much of this : For if I dye in the Peace of God, and Christ receive my departing Soul ; whether my Body putrifie above ground, or under, that concerns the Living and Survivors more than me. Christ will recollect my scattered Dust ; and raise it a Glorious Body, like his own : Though sown in Corruption and Dishonour ; it
C shall

shall be raised Incorruptible and Glorious : But it's reckon'd a Priviledge to be Buried. *David* acknowledged this to the Men of *Bethshemeth*, in Burying the Body of *Saul*, 2 Sam. 2. 5. *Blessed are ye of the Lord, who have shewn this Kindness to Saul ; and have buried him : The Lord shew Kindness and Truth to you :* It ordinarily bespeaks Kindness ; and may imply the Hope of the Resurrection of those Bodies, that are committed to the Ground.

But this Expression, *Thou shalt come to thy Grave*, may denote further, that not only shall they be Buried, and have a Grave ; but Dye at Home ; have a Peaceable End ; Dye among their Relations, so as to be Buried in their own Sepulchre, and have their Bones laid

laid in the same Grave, or Vault, where their nearest Kindred have been Interr'd, with those of their own Family, who Dy'd before them.

III. *That to come to ones Grave in a full Age, is a very great Favour.* God hath put an Honour upon Old Age, and promised it as a Blessing to them that fear him: He hath requir'd us to honour the Face of the Old Man; and made it a part of Religion, by connecting it with the Fear of God, *Lev. 19. 32.* This is one Duty requir'd in the fifth Commandment; which is the first with Promise, *Eph. 5. 2.* And when God would threaten to punish a Family; He declares there should be *no Old Man in it, 1 Sam. 2. 31.*

It was foretold to *Abraham*, as a Blessing, that he should dye an Old Man ; that *he should go to his Fathers in Peace*, and dye in a good Old Age, Gen. 15. 15. He that feareth God, and walketh in his way, he shall see his Childrens Children ; and unto such God hath said ; *With long Life will I satisfie him, and shew him my Salvation*, Psal. 91. ult. and 128. ult. There shall not be an Old Man, who hath not filled his days, Isa. 65. 20. is a Promise that concerns the later Ages of the World : *i. e.* The Aged shall compleat their time, and fall ripe into the Grave. They shall not be taken away as Corn on the House-top, that withers before it be grown up : But as Corn that is fully ripe, and fit to be gathered into the Barn. S. John, the most
be-

beloved Disciple, liv'd longest of any of the Apostles : He was banish'd in the time of the Emperour *Domitian*, which was Eighty Years after Christ ; and so he could not be less than a Hundred Years old.

Length of Days, long Life, and Peace, are promised in many places to such as please God, and obey him. *Zach. 8. 4. Thus saith the Lord of Hosts ; There shall yet Old Men and Old Women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem. You shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your Days in the Land which ye shall possess. Deut. 5. 33. 25. ch. 15. What Man is he that desireth Life, and loveth many Days that he may see good ? Keep thy Tongue*

*from evil, &c. Psal. 34. 12, 13. By me thy Days shall be multiplied, and the Years of thy Life shall be increased, If Life it self be a Blessing, if to be taken away by Death, sooner than according to the ordinary Course of Nature were not an Evil; God would not have promised to reward with length of Days. It were not the subject matter of a Promise, if it were not Good. You have the contrary Threatnings in many places, Job 18. 16, 18, 19, 20. So Chap. 21. 17. That the Years of the Wicked shall be shortened; That his Candle shall be put out; That he shall not live out half his Days, Prov. 10. 27. Psal. 55. 23. I will be a swift witness against the Fornicator, Adulterer and false Swearer. The triumph of the Wicked shall be short, and the joy of
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the Hypocrite but for a moment. The Years of the Wicked shall be shortened; his Root shall be dried up beneath, and above his Branches shall be cut off; his remembrance shall perish from the Earth, and he shall have no name in the Street. He shall be driven from Light into Darkness, and chased out of the World. He shall neither have Son nor Daughter among his People, nor any remaining in his Dwelling: Such are the Dwellings of the Wicked, and this is the Portion of them that know not God. His Branch shall not be green; he shall shake off his unripe fruit as the Vine, and cast off his Flower as the Olive. His Candle shall be put out, and sudden Destruction shall overtake him. He shall be as Stubble before the Wind, and as Chaff which the Storm carries away. It was for the Wickedness of the Old World, that God shortened the

Life of Man after the Flood : And again at the Building of *Babel*, for the Sins of those that went about to build it : And again in the Wilderness, because of the Peoples murmuring, and despising the promised Land, of which *Moses* speaks. *Psal.* 90. 7, 8, 9. But to come to the Grave in a full Age, may likewise import more than barely living long.

First, Riches and Honour are often joyn'd with Length of Days: Though Old Age and Long Life are prefer'd before them, as the right-hand Blessing ; *Prov.* 3. 16. *Length of Days are in her right-hand, and in her left, Riches and Honour.* It is mention'd with Advantage concerning *David*, that he dy'd in a good Old Age, full of Days, Riches and Honour, *1 Chron.* 29. 28. 'Tis
a Mercy

a Mercy when our Relations and Friends do not leave the World in Disgrace : That they do not set in a Cloud ; and go off undesired and unlamented : But honour'd with the Affections of many living ; and their Lamentations when they are remov'd.

Secondly, In a full Age, so as to be satisfied with having liv'd so long ; and willing to dye. With long Life *will I satisfy thee*, and shew thee my Salvation. There are few Wicked Men who are satisfied with living ; they would fain be Immortal here. God is forc'd to Demand, and *require* their Souls of them : *This Night shall thy Soul be required of thee* : But many a Good Man can say with the Prophet *Elijah* ; and in a much better Temper, than he was in when he
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used these words, *1 Kings 19. 4.* It is enough, now O Lord, take away my Life. Or with old Simeon; Now Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in Peace. Not only I am content to go, if thou call me, but with the Apostle, *I desire to be dissolved*; for while I am present in the Body, I am absent from the Lord. Come Lord Jesus! come quickly!

Thirdly, In a full Age, when they have liv'd to see their Children brought up, and disposed of in the World: And it may be have seen their Childrens Children. This is a further Mercy; that God hath made their House to grow; and they can leave the World with hope, that their Children shall follow them to Heaven, and that they also will command their Children after them to serve the

the Lord : Not to be called out of the World, till they have a fair and hopeful prospect that the Covenant Promise shall be made good to their Seed ; that they that descend from them shall bear up the Name of God, own his Truth, and live to be Blessings in the World, and not to reproach and shame the Stock from whence they come.

Fourthly, To dye in a full Age, a good Old Age, with a competent vigour of Health of Body and Mind, in their Elder Years. I mean without the extraordinary Infirmities of Old Age. *Moses* being an Hundred and Twenty Years old, yet *his Eye was not dim, nor his Natural Strength abated*, Deut. 34. 7. With what Thankfulness doth good old *Joshua* speak this ;
Josh.

Josh. 4. 10, 11. I am this Day Four-score and Five Years old ; and yet I am as strong this Day, as in the Day that Moses sent me ; as my Strength was then so it is now. What Vigour of Health, both of Body and Mind, God blest the Honourable Person Deceas'd withal, for the greatest Part of her Life, [all Things considered as to Her particular Case,] ought to be acknowledged with great Thankfulness. For though Old Age be a Blessing ; yet a very infirm one is not desirable. Which
* a Great Man takes notice of upon such an Occasion : ' Who, saith ' he, would desire to live very long ' Uneasie to himself, and Trou- ' blesome to others ; who would

* *Arch-Bishop Tillotson's Funeral Sermon of Dr. Witchcot.*

' not

‘ not think it time to dye when by
‘ reason of Old Age we can hard-
‘ ly live with the Good Will of our
‘ Friends ; when those who ought
‘ to love us best, begin to think
‘ much that we live so long ; and
‘ can hardly forbear to give us
‘ broad signs that they are weary
‘ of our Company : In such a Case
‘ one would almost be contented
‘ to dye out of Civility, and not
‘ choose to make a long stay, where
‘ a Man sees his Company is no
‘ longer acceptable ; if we can
‘ hope we shall be welcome to a
‘ better Place ; and more delight-
‘ ful Society ? Why should we de-
‘ sire to thrust our selves upon
‘ those, who have much ado to
‘ refrain from telling us that
‘ our Room is better than our
‘ Company. The Extremities of
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Old Age are generally peevish and quarrellsome, falling back to the weak and helpless Condition of Infancy and Childhood : And yet less Care is commonly taken to please Aged Persons, and less Kindness shewn them, (unless in Expectation of recieving greater,) than unto Children ; because these are cherished in Hope, the others in Despair, of proving better. So that if God see good, it is not desirable to try Nature, and the Kindness, and Good Will of our Relations to the uttermost.

I mention this, because 'tis one of the Blessings of Old Age, to have the Taper of Life burn clear to the last : For any to have their Understanding good ; their Memories and Senses tolerable ; their Conversation acceptable ; their Rela-

Relations kind, and respectful to them, as long as they live : This is a rare Case, and happens seldom to Old People : And when it doth, it is commonly to those who, by a Regular and Religious Course of Life, have reserved some of their best Spirits till last ; and have not, by Vice and Intemperance, drawn off Life to the Dregs ; and left nothing to be enjoy'd, but Infirmities and Ill Humours, Guilt and Repentance : 'Tis the Blessing of such who have laid in a good Provision for such an Evil Day, by Peace with God, and the Comforts of a good Conscience, the Hopes of Heaven, and the Sence of God's Favour and loving Kindness, which is better than Life. This is a special Priviledge, and a singular Favour

vour of God, that might easily be apply'd to the present Example. Which brings me to the Fourth Thing.

IV. *That Old Age, with the Grace of God, and serious Religion, to ripen and fit the Soul for Heaven, like a shock of Corn fit to be gathered, is a most desirable Blessing.*

But before I speak to that, I must Answer an Objection, that you will be ready to make from Observation and Experience; viz. That this Promise is not very often fulfilled even to Good Men: That there is little distinction between the Righteous and the Wicked in this Respect: Many Excellent Persons are taken off in their Youth, and many Wicked People live to a considerable old Age.

Answer.

Answer. Many Things may be said in Answer to this : As that the Providences of God are of a great depth : And that if a Good Man be call'd out of the World in the midst of his Days, he will have no cause to repent that he did not live to be old. If God promise Long Life, and give Eternal Life, there is no more Damage done to the Person, than if you should promise another Twenty Shillings, and give him a Thousand Guinea's. And by giving long Life to some Good Men, God shews that it is his Gift ; as by bringing others to Heaven sooner, he tells us he has something better to bestow.

We are hereby instructed in the nature and value of present Things, and assisted to expect Eternal Rewards

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wards

wards and Punishments. We cannot reckon any such Temporal Blessing a peculiar Mark of God's Favour, because 'tis not the Portion of all Good Men, and others sometimes partake of it. Without this Variety in the Dispensations of Providence, we should want one of the best Moral Arguments for another Life after this.

We must likewise consider the difference between the Dispensation of God's Providence to Good Men under the Old Testament, and now under the New. Eternal Rewards were couched and shadowed very much under the Promise of Temporal Blessings on the Jewish Nation : Their Land of *Canaan* was a Type of Heaven ; and long Life promised to them, was the Figure of an Eternal one :
And

And though, now under the Gospel we have the *Promise of the Life that now is, as well as of that which is to come* ; yet the fulfilling of any such Promises must be left to the Wisdom of God, who knows what is best for our Spiritual Advantage ; and when in all the Circumstances of it, it will tend to our truest Interest, and promote our Eternal Welfare. God who knows our Strength and Weakness ; what Temptations we are able to resist, and what not ; knows when, and to whom, to fulfil such a Promise as this, of long Life. And we cannot be so unreasonable as to desire it, if it would tend to our Detriment. 'Tis therefore added *Deut. 5. 16. Honour thy Father, &c. that thy Days may be prolonged ; and that it may go well with thee.*

thee. It must also be considered that there were particular Reasons for the extraordinary long Lives of the Patriarchs, and those before the Flood, that will not reach to our Times.

Josephus * gives this Account of it, that they being Men beloved of God, and newly made by him, with a strong Constitution, and excellent Temper of Body, and using better Diet, the Vigour of the Earth serving at first for the Production of better Fruits : All these Things joyn'd with their Temperance, constant Exercise, moderate Labour, a sweet Temper of Air, &c. might con-

* *The concurrent Testimony of the Greeks and Barbarians concerning the Long Lives of Men in Antient Times, is mentioned by Josephus, Antiq. lib. 1. c. 3.*

tribute

tribute much to the Length of their Lives. Which was but necessary, that the World might be the sooner Peopled *, Knowledge and Religion more certainly propagated by the Authority of living Teachers, and Arts and Sciences brought to greater Perfection.

Not that the Priviledge of living so long was peculiar to the Holy Patriarchs mention'd in Holy Scripture ; but that generally speaking, it was true of all in those Times. We read but of Seven Generations of the Descendants of the Race of Cain, from

** Which Reason is long since ceas'd, and the shortning of Man's Life is as needful now, as the prolonging it was in the first Ages of the World. Humani Generis Incrementum Terra non caperet, si omnes senescerent qui nascuntur. Petrarch.*

the Death of *Abel* unto the Flood. And if it had not been thus, the Peopling of the World, and the Increase of Mankind, could not have been attained by the long Lives only of Five or Six of the Holy Patriarchs: Nor could another End have been reached, (*viz.*) the increase of Arts and Sciences, and useful Knowledge for Humane Life; because not only Good Men, nor principally they, but others, who have little Religion, are as well concerned in those matters *.

* See this more largely treated of by *Joh. H. Heidegerus* *Hist. sacra Patriarch.* Tom. 1. 4°. *Amstel.* 1667. exerc. 14. *de longævitæ Patriarcharum.* And *Mons. le Clerc. Comment. in Gen.* cap. 5. v. 27. *Fol. Amstel.* 1693. And *B. Patrick on Gen. 5.* and *Hackwell's Apology.* *Fol. Sir W. Raleigh's Hist. of the World,* l. 1. c. 5. §. 5, 6.

'Tis true *S. Cyprian*, and some of the Fathers, thought that Mens Lives were now shorter, because the World is grown old and declin'd, and that Nature decays by degrees, and that it is upon that Account that Men do not now live so long as formerly. But then, how comes it to pass that for so many Ages, as from *David's* Time to ours, there hath been little or no Change? For he is called *an Old Man, and full of Days, at Seventy.* 1 Chron. 23. 1. We should now be in the decrepit Old Age of the World, and hardly live Ten Years, instead of Threescore and Ten, if Nature decay'd so as Man's Life did proportionably decrease, by reason of the old Age of the World. We must therefore consider the determina-

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tion of this matter, to depend entirely on the Holy and Wise Providence of God, to serve the Purposes of his Glory, in Mercy, and Justice, and Wisdom, past our finding out, as to many things : Tho' sometimes we discern a plain Reason. As we may well suppose, it was one principal Reason of the long Life of the Holy Patriarchs, that they might propagate Religion in their Generations, as *Abraham*, and *Noah*, and *Enoch*, and the rest did. There being no Scriptures written; the Knowledge of God was convey'd from Parents to Children ; and God prolonged their Lives, that they might be the Props and Pillars of Religion in their Families, and transmit a true Account of the Creation of the World , and of the Counsel of God to
Adam

Adam concerning the promised Seed : The Tradition of these Divine Revelations to our first Parents, might have been continued by Three Men from *Adam* to the *Israelites* going into *Egypt*. *Adam* being taught of God by Oracle, he liv'd long enough to teach many others : *Methuselah* liv'd Three Hundred Forty Three Years with *Adam*, and with *Noah* Five Hundred, and continued to the Flood : *Noah* liv'd with *Abraham* Fifty Eight Years, by whom it was not hard to pass by *Isaac*, *Jacob*, and his Posterity, to *Moses* : For *Sem* liv'd with *Methuselah* Ninety Eight Years, and flourish'd about Five Hundred Years after the Flood : And *Isaac* liv'd Fifty Years with *Sem*, and dy'd about Ten Years before the Children of *Israel* went down into *Egypt* : So that by the long Lives
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of the Patriarchs, *Methuselah, Sem* and *Isaac*, might continue the Tradition of the Creation, and the Truth and Purity of Religion, from *Adam* to that time; which was above Two Thousand Two Hundred Years.

But 'tis sufficient in Answer to the Objection, that, Whenever a Good Man lives long, 'tis in Mercy to him: But *the Sinner a Hundred Years old is accursed*, Isa. 65. 20. If Wicked Men have their Lives prolonged, as well as those that fear God, yet there is a vast difference; the one is a Gift of Divine Love, and the Fruit of a Promise; the other is only a common Benefit, to serve some Ends of Providence: For the sake, it may be, of some Good Men to whom such a one is Related; or, it may be, as a Reward

ward of some little Service, that even a Wicked Man may be employ'd to do in this World. In the one Case long Life is in order to greater Mercy ; but the other will have a dismal End in his Eternal Ruine. The former like a gentle River, as one well expresseth it, which hath run many Miles, and watered and enrich'd the Neighbouring Grounds, mingles at last with the vast Ocean of Glory : The other, though, like the River *Jordan*, it hath extended its Course a great way, falls at last into the *dead Sea*, into endless Howlings. In the one Case 'tis a sign that a great deal of further Mercy and Blessing is to be added to it ; In the other, that after this all his Blessings are at an end, and he shall have no more.

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The Sinner of an Hundred Years old shall be accursed. Some Sinners bring Age upon themselves, by their Wickedness, before the time; and are an Hundred Years old at Forty. Some commit the Sins of an Hundred Years in half that space of time; and though they should live to that Age would continue to sin on. And in Old Age their full Ears of Corn are blasted with a Mildew, they are under the Curse of God: And their longest Day shall shut up in Everlasting Darkness, never to see Light or Comfort more.

Besides, the Promise of long Life must be considered as made to such as are eminent for honouring their Parents; as are strict and conscientious in the Government of the Tongue; as are Exemplary
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for Justice towards Men, and Charity to the Poor. Now every Good Man who hath Sincerity enough to carry him to Heaven, can't expect the accomplishment of these, and the like Temporal Promises, which are made to Persons who are peculiarly eminent for such Vertues.

I conclude this Head with the words of the Wise Man, *Eccl. 8. 12, 13. Though a Sinner do evil a hundred times, and his Days be prolonged; yet surely I know it shall be well with them that fear God, that fear before him. But it shall not be well with the Wicked, neither shall he prolong his Days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God. Job 21. 7, 20. The Wicked live, become old; yea, are mighty in Power: His Eyes shall see his Destruction, he shall drink*

drink of the Wrath of the Almighty.

I come now to consider, That Old Age, with the Grace of God, and a Course of serious Religion, is a very great Blessing; when the Soul is fitted and ripened for Heaven. And this is the Benefit of a long Life, that we may know, and serve, and praise, and glorifie, and enjoy God more than others; this has made the best Men desire and pray for a longer Life. *Psal. 39. vlt. Spare me that I may recover Strength, and be fitted for my Duty and thy Service, and fitter to leave the World, when thou shalt call me. Psal. 71. 18. Isa. 38. 19.* This is the proper Blessing of a prolonged Life, to do God more Service in this World, and lay up a good Foundation for hereafter, *viz.* the Comforts of a good Conscience against

against a dying Hour, and a greater meetness for the Heavenly Inheritance.

'Tis doubtless true, that the Grace of God doth beautifie every Age; but how Lovely and Honourable is the Hoary Head, when found in the way of Righteousness? After the resistance of many Temptations, and enduring many Years Conflicts, that yet the Soul is fixt for God and Heaven, and its Choice abides. When after many Years Experience, they like their Master's Service the better, when they have faithfully serv'd him for Fifty, Sixty or Seventy Years. To say with good Obadiah, 1 Kings 18. *I have feared Jehovah from my Youth.* It was a Title of Honour given Gnason of Cyprus, that he is call'd an old Disciple.

ciple, Acts 21. 16. So *Anna* the Prophetess was of a great Age, Luke 2. 36. So *Paul the aged*, and now also a Prisoner of Christ, *Philemon*, v. 9. What a stock of Grace must such an old Disciple be supposed to have? who was early planted in the House of God, and for several Years flourish'd in the Courts of the Lord; who hath been treasuring up, and increasing from Year to Year; adding Grace to Grace, and proceeding from Strength to Strength? And 'tis but an equitable Supposition, that such have understood their Opportunities, and manag'd their Time and Talents to good Advantage.

How comfortably may such a one reflect on the past Instances of God's Wisdom and Faithfulness,
Kindness

Kindness and Compassion ? On the sweet Communion he hath had with God in his younger Years, at his first Dedication of himself to be the Lords, under such a Man's Ministry, who is long since dead ; at the Table of the Lord, in such or such an Assembly of Christians, in the City or Country ? What comfortable Reflections can he make ? What pleasant Reviews may such a one have of Spiritual, Inward, Experimental Religion ? Who can say with *David*, *I have known thy Testimonies of old*, Psal. 119. 152. who hath often seen the Word of God fulfilled to himself, and others ? Who hath observed how Publick and Private Providences did comment upon the Holy Scriptures ; and it may be, hath had the Pleasure

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sure and Joy, to see his Prayers answered, and his Endeavours prospered, in the Education of Children; that they and theirs after them, might know and serve the Lord? 'Tis a great Blessing to live to such an Age, and find this. How helpful may their long Experience be, to inable them to do good in the last part of their Life, more than in their younger Years? For Wisdom is gotten by Experience; and generally speaking, they who have longest Time to improve, must be the wisest People. And 'tis as rare, almost, to see a Young Man Wise and Prudent, as to see an Old Man Strong and Healthy. Therefore Two or Three Years of the Life of an Aged, Experienced Christian, especially if imploy'd in any Publick Station
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of Service, either in Church or State, may be of more use, than many Years of Younger less Experienced Men.

And there are many Services and Duties for the Honour of God, which we are now call'd to, that even the Saints in Heaven are not capable of. The faithful improvement of our Talents as to these, may increase our Happiness in another World. If there be different Degrees of Glory, he that hath a long Life of Service and Improvement in Grace, may hope to rise higher than others.

How Useful may be the *Example* of an old Disciple, and how Beneficial his *Prayers* to the Publick? But especially to his own Family and Relations? And there are many, who understand the

Blessing of long Life in the *Fifth Commandment*, which is promised to those that *Honour their Parents*, to be the Consequence of *Parents Blessing their Children*, by their Prayers and Intercession to God for them. And since the Apostle tells us, that without Contradiction the less is blessed of the greater, and the Prosperity of Children depends very much (as in Reason and Experience is evident it doth,) upon the earnest Prayers of holy Parents for their obedient Children; one may wonder that Children should now be taught (by any otherwise good People,) not to ask that Blessing, not to beg those Prayers, which have so manifest an Advantage. Especially when the doing it, hath the general Attestation of all *Christendom*; and

and is no contemptible Testimony of that *Honour* and *Respect*, which is due from Children to their *Religious Parents*. I say Religious, because to make Old Age Honourable, and a Blessing, those Graces must be supposed, which are the Ornaments of that Age, Sobriety and Temperance, Gravity and Seriousness, Soundness in the Faith, Charity, Patience, and Diligence to finish the Work God hath given them to do. How honourable and excellent is such a one? Full of Days, and full of good Works? Who hath serv'd his Generation according to the Will of God, and is now trimming his Lamps, girding up his Loins, and waiting for the coming of his Lord? What a Priviledge, what a Blessing is this?

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As to the Metaphor in the Text, *As Corn fully ripe, fit to be gathered into the Barn,* many Things might be consider'd for Illustration : What a variety of Seasons it passeth through before it be ripe ; how * gradually it doth advance after it is sown ; how it springs up like an Herb, shoots forth a tender Blade, riseth to a Stalk, and then comes to be ripe : To all which a great deal of Time is requisite, before it be cut down, and laid in the Barn ; and then 'tis to be threshed, and fanned, before it be fit for the Master's use : But yet the Harvest is certain ; and when

* See a large and ingenious Account of this by Sir Matthew Hale, in his *Magnetismus Magnus ; or Metaphysical and Divine Contemplations on the Loadstone*, 8vo, 1695. on Psal. LXXXVI. 8. P. 151.

the

the Corn is ripe it shall be cut down. 'Twere easie to run the Parallel, as to a good Old Age according to this Metaphor.

You see plainly, 'tis not meerly to have liv'd long ; but to live so as to be ripe for Heaven, that is the great Blessing. That Old Age which is truly honourable, is not to be known by a wither'd Face, but a mortifi'd Spirit ; not by the decays of the Natural Body, but by weakening the Body of Sin ; not by the Temporal Good we have enjoy'd for many Years ; but by the Spiritual Good we have received and done. An Hoary Head is a Crown ; but *Righteousness* is the Jewel of it. As a fair Woman without Discretion is like a Jewel in a Swines Snout ; so are Grey Hairs on the Head of an old Sin-

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ner. To be an old Atheist, or Drunkard, or Miser, and have many External Advantages above others, without the Grace of God, and serious Religion, is no great Blessing ; such a one is accursed, though a Hundred Years old. To be good, and do good, is indeed *Life* ; and from our beginning to be, and do so, we must reckon our Lives. As he that was converted at Sixty, being asked Five Years after, how old he was, did very justly and truly say, he was but *Five Years old*. He had liv'd no longer to any good Purpose, tho' he had been Threescore Years more in the World. He reckon'd his Life, not from the time of his being born, but from his new Birth ; from his being born again. They therefore who remember
their

their Creator in their Youth, and begin betimes to serve God ; if they reach to Old Age, they live three times as long as other People, who yet may count as many Years as they, from their Infancy and Childhood, but have liv'd in the pleasures of Sin, and in forgetfulness of God, and so for many Years were dead whilst alive.

The Application of all this shall be by some Inferences of Truth, and Duty.

First, If length of Days, and a long continuance in the World be an honourable Priviledge and Blessing, what high and adoring Thoughts should we have of the *Eternity of God*, who is pleased to condescend to us, to be call'd the *Ancient*

Ancient of Days ; and who gloryeth in this, that *he inhabiteth Eternity* ; unto whom a Thousand Years are but as one Day, yea but as yesterday when it is past ; and as a Watch in the Night. *A Thousand Years* are in God's sight, but *as one Day*. If then we suppose a Man as old as this World, born above Five Thousand Years ago, he would be, in God's Account, but as one born Five Days ago : And by this Computation, he that hath liv'd Sixty Two Years, hath liv'd but One and half ; and he that was born Forty Years since, is but as if he came now into the World this present Hour. But there is a shorter Reckoning ; for it is added, and *as a Watch in the Night*, which is the fourth part of Twelve Hours, or Three Hours. *A Thou-*
sand

Jan Years are no more, in God's Account, than *Three Hours*; and by this Computation, he that dyes between *Thirty* and *Forty Years* old, is as if he had liv'd but *Five* or *Six Minutes*; and he that dyes betwixt *Sixty* and *Seventy*, as if he liv'd but *Twelve* or *Thirteen Minutes*. Such is the Proportion of Minutes in *Three Hours* compared to a *Thousand Years*. But the longest Age imaginable, compar'd with *God's Eternity*, is not so much as *One Minute*. For let a Man bring forth all the Numbers he can think of; let him heap Millions upon Millions; let him lay on *Ten Thousand Millions* one upon another; they are all less than one Unit unto Eternity. One single Minute bears some Proportion with the greatest Number

ber of Years, that can be reckoned : But there's no Proportion between Finite and Infinite. Take as many Millions of Years as you please, and add as many more to them, Ten Thousand Times over, yet still they'll make but a Finite Number ; whereas God's Duration is Infinite. With what humble Adoration should we think of the Almighty, *Eternal God*, who is from Everlasting to Everlasting.

Secondly, If Old Age and Length of Days be a promised Blessing ; how faulty is it for any to shorten their Days ; or not to use proper Means for prolonging their Lives. And here such are to be reprov'd, who either by Luxury and Intemperance , or by Quarrelling and Duelling, or by Attempts of Self-Murder,

Murder, out of Peevishness and Discontent ; or any other way, do discover a Contempt of Life ; or do not take care to preserve it. They consider not what a Blessing Life is, that will throw it away, and hasten their own Death. There are excellent Purposes for the Glory of God, and our own Good, to be served by this present Life, and therefore we must not foolishly part with it, till he who sent us into this World doth call us into the other. And he that goes thither before he is sent for, hath no Reason to expect to be welcome there. He that will shorten his own Time by Wickedness, or Wilfulness, of any sort, he despiseth this Blessing in the Text ; and exposeth himself to the Anger of God, and a terrible Reckoning beyond

beyond the Grave. You acknowledge that after Death follows Eternal Judgment ; whereas many of the Heathens reckon'd Annihilation was the hardest and worst of the Case. But Christian Religion hath brought Life and Immortality to light ; and the Scriptures tell us of future Punishments, as well as Rewards, which should make us value and improve this present Life ; for how long soever it be, 'tis little enough to prepare for the Everlasting World. This I have already taken notice of, and so proceed to infer,

Thirdly, That the Contempt of Old Age, which God hath promised as a Blessing, must needs be a Sin. I apprehend no Impropriety for one that is not very Old, to plead for the Honour of Old Age :

Age : 'Tis but a piece of Justice to Humane Nature. And whoever in their Youth will divert themselves with the unavoidable Infirmities of the Aged, he does but laugh at himself before-hand, and expose his own future Condition. It is well known, to the Honour of Old Age, that in almost all Countries, they of most Years have been thought fittest to preside in Counsels, and have the Direction in Publick Affairs : So that the very Name of Office and Authority is deriv'd from thence : * Witness the *Jewish* Elders, the *Spartan* *gerusia*, the *Roman* Senate, and the *Saxon* Aldermen. Though, younger People were sometimes

* See Mr. J. Collier's *Essays*, Second Part, 8vo, of *Old Age*. Sir Francis Bacon's *Essays* of *Tough and Age*, §. 42.

join'd

join'd in the Commission. The Reason is plain, Matters of Moment being to be managed with Conduct and Temper; the Aged have always stood fairest for such a Trust and Honour. And among several Nations, and particularly the *Lacedemonians*, and from them the * *Romans*, they were honour'd as Fathers of their Country; and reverenc'd almost as Gods. To honour Ancient People is join'd with worshipping the Gods in several Countries. Temporal Jurisdiction and Spiritual, the Magistracy and the Priesthood, for the most part have been appropriated to the *Elder*, as the Names for

* Credebant hoc grande nefas, & morte pium, si Juvenis vetulo non assurrexerat. *Juvenal*, Satyr. 29. in Euterp.

both

both, in almost all Languages, will evidence. And therefore whatever Alterations there may seem to be in Elder Persons, by reason of their Age, that may any ways expose them to Contempt; if they are such, who have had Great and Useful Employments in the World; their very Infirmities are to be attributed to their Generous and Profitable Labours, and look'd upon as Honourable Sears: They having spent themselves in the Service of Christ, and the Souls of Men; or in the Service of their King and Country: and so the very Decays of Nature, in such Persons, should rather move Respect than Pity. God hath commanded us to honour Old Age, Lev. 19. 32. *Thou shalt rise up before the Hoary Head, and honour*

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the Face of the Old Man, and fear thy God ; I am the Lord. It is injoynd as an Instance of the Fear of God. So that the Contempt of Old Age is not only Rudeness, and Incivility, but Irreligion ; not only shews the want of good Manners, but it is Profaneness. Rebuke not an Elder, or Ancient Person, but intreat him as a Father. 1 Tim. 5. 1, 2. Likewise you Younger submit your selves to the Elder. 1 Pet. 5. 5. Especially Children to Parents : You know the Punishment of Disobedient Children. Prov. 21. 18. If a Magistrate neglected his Duty ; the Ravens of the Valley shall pluck out his Eyes, and the young Eagles shall eat them. As to Parents, the Obligation is manifold not to despise their Age ; but reverence and honour them ; to advise with them ;

them ; to hearken to them, and be guided by them ; especially in the great Turns of Life. *Prov.* 23. 2. *Hearken to thy Father that begat thee, and despise not thy Mother when she is old.* Because the Mother is more likely to be slighted than the Father ; God commands the Honour and Fear of the Mother first. *Lev.* 19. 3. *Ye shall fear every Man his Mother, and his Father, &c.*

And here may be considered, what is certainly confirmed by Experience, in very many Instances : That when God makes any Breach in a Family, by the Death of a Parent, whether Father or Mother, there are hardly any Children, though never so Respectful, Affectionate, and Dutiful to the Deceased, but have many a seri-

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ous Thought upon their Decease ;
Oh were my Honour'd and Dear
Parent now alive, I think I should
expres my Duty and Affection,
in this and the other Instance,
more and better than I did : Even
they who did observe the Fifth
Commandment , so as to be ac-
cepted with God, and with their
Parents, yet, after their Death,
will have some such Thoughts.
There is doubtless more of Reli-
gion, in the good Carriage of
Children toward their Parents ,
than is commonly believed ; espe-
cially in their declining *Years*. Re-
verence and Respect is due to
them for their Age, if they were
not our Parents. 'Tis a very ill
Symptom upon any Nation, when
Children behave themselves proudly against
the

the Ancient ; and the Base against the Honourable *. Isa. 24. 2. And considering how soon they are to remove out of this World, to take their final leave, and imbark for a Foreign Country , 'tis but a piece of common Justice to our departing Friends , 'tis no more than is due to their Condition ; to shew them Respect and Affection at last ; to signify we are loath to lose them ; and that we wish them Happy in their Removal.

Secondly, Let me apply this for Exhortation to Younger, and to

* See an Instance of this, even among the Tartars and Chinese, how the Love, Obedience, and Respect of Children for their Parents is conducive to the Publick Peace of a Country. P. le Comte's *Memoirs and Observations of the Empire of China*. 8vo, 1698. Part. 2 of their Policy and Government, p. 264, 265, &c.

Elder Persons. First to Youth, in Three Things.

First, Do not count upon it with any Certainty, that you shall live to be Old. How few comparatively do out-live Thirty ? And whether you are call'd away in Youth or Riper Years, there is a Blessed or Miserable Eternity to follow. O that it were consider'd, and believ'd, you shall not dye the sooner, by being ready and prepared to dye while you are Young. And as it will not hasten your Death, so neither will it spoil the Pleasure and Comfort of your present Life ; but every way contribute to it. But how little ground have you to expect to live to be very Old, when so many dye suddenly, and so many dye Younger than you : And you know

know there is no Opportunity beyond the Grave, of making Peace with Heaven, if you dye in your Sins. Your Work is great, and you cannot begin too soon : you may not live to that time, unto which you adjourn your good Purposes. It is the Devil's great Artifice to cheat Men of the present Season, by the Promise and Expectation of future Time. We are not certain whether God will try us with another Day ; or if we trifle now , whether he will then vouchsafe his Grace ; therefore *now while it is called to Day*, hear the Voice of God , Remember thy Creator , and work out thy Salvation. How many of your Acquaintance have dyed Younger than you, who were as likely to live, and more so ? You

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think you have a great while to come, Thirty, Forty, Fifty Years ; this seems at a mighty distance ; though they who have liv'd so long, when it is gone, say it is past as yesterday, they can't tell how. A Week to come seems longer than a Year that's past. But think seriously, how many more have dyed, before they have arriv'd to your Age, than ever did attain to it. And how unreasonable is it, to desire to dye of Old Age, and of the Decay of Natural Strength, considering that is a kind of Death, of all others the most rare. If that be most Natural that is most common, to dye of Old Age is a Death rare, singular, and extraordinary, and so less Natural, than any other of the numberless ways of dying, and the

the less to be expected. 'Tis not always true, that the fewer Days and Years a Man has past, the more he has to come. A new built House may fall, when an old one stands. Therefore count not upon a long Life, but begin presently to prepare to dye. God may call thee forth to that War, from which there is no Discharge, without giving thee an Hours Warning. *You know not what shall be on the morrow.* Jam. 4. 14.

Listen not to those, while you are Young, who would perswade you to put off your Repentance to a further time : Who will tell you, you are in the heat and flower of your Youth, and should now (if ever) indulge your selves : That Religion is a melancholly thing, and you'll have time enough
for

for it hereafter. But who would defer his Repentance till hereafter, that doth not know but he may dye to Night ? Who would put it off to Old Age, when 'tis so uncertain whether he shall not dye Young ? *Ludovicus Capellus* tells us of one of the Rabbins, that when one of his Disciples came to him, to know what was the fittest Time to repent in ; He answer'd, *One Day before his Death* ; meaning, *Presently* : Because the youngest have no Assurance of another Day.

Secondly, Take Care in Youth to lay a good Foundation for Old Age, by being such who may apply the Promises of long Life, unto whom they are like to be made good. There's nothing but serious Religion betimes, can bring you to a healthful and comfortable

able Old Age. This would tend to promote and preserve your Health, as well as Interest you in the favourable Protection and Providence of God. Serious Godliness is a Friend to the Health of our Bodies, and the Chearfulness and Content of our Minds ; and not to obey God, is ordinarily to neglect our * present Interest, as well as our Eternal Salvation. To fear the Lord, and depart from Evil, is Health to the Navel, and Marrow to the Bones. To how many Lusts and Vices is an untimely Death threatned ? And of

* See Dr. Lucas, *The true Notion of Humane Life*, 8vo, p. 187. Shewing how the lengthning of our Lives depends on the Chearfulness of the Mind, the Health of the Body, and the Providence of God for Protection, besides the Good Will of our Fellow Creatures ; and how serious Religion doth contribute to it on all these Accounts.

how

how many is it a Natural and Ordinary Consequence ? There are Promises of long Life made to such as are Just in their Dealings, and Charitable to the Poor ; to such who are Meek and Patient, who trust in God, and do all the Good they can in the World. But for Sensual Men, they dig their own Grave by their Vices : They pour in Wine and strong Drink, and let out Life : They strangle themselves with their Intemperance, and hasten the Infirmities of Old Age by the Excesses of Youth. He who would have his Health hold out, must live Regularly, and not too fast. He that will indulge Youthful Lusts, will corrupt his Blood, and weaken his Constitution, and give Death opportunity to enter : And if he
live,

live, shall possess the Sins of his Youth ; his Bones shall be filled with them, they must lye down with him in the Dust. *Job* 20. 11. What painful Methods will Men submit to for the Preservation of Life ? Skin for Skin, and all that a Man hath will he give for his Life. But he that loveth Life, and desireth many Days, and to see Good, let him fear God, and keep his Commandments ; for after all the endeavours used to keep off Death, and prolong Life, there's none like remembring our Creator in the Days of our Youth. And 'tis not only for Murder, and Adultery, and the vilest Impurities, that God threatens an untimely Death ; but for Disobedience to Parents, for Covetousness, Oppression, Injustice, and Worldliness.

ness. Jer. 17. 11. *As the Partridge sitteth on Eggs, and hatcheth them not : so he that getteth Riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his Days, and at his end shall be a Fool.* Prov. 28. 16. *He that hateth Covetousness shall prolong his Days.* 'Twere easie to inlarge on this Head.

Let me only add that yet such as are Religious in their Youth, should not be over desirous of living very long : For though it is a Blessing as hath been prov'd, when join'd with Piety: and if God think fit, that we may live to be Instrumental to God's Glory, the Good of others, and our own Benefit ; yet if we consider our Enemies, and our Temptations, and our own Corruptions, the odds is on the other side : Blessed are the
Dead,

Dead, who dye in the Lord, tho' in their Youth.

Thirdly, If you should live to Old Age, and feel the Infirmities of it, you will not be able to bear up *then*, without living well *now*. Nothing but the Comforts of a good Conscience, will be able to support you, when *the Evil Days shall come, wherein you shall have no Pleasure*; as 'tis describ'd at large Eccl. 12. which I thought to have Paraphras'd, and Explain'd, but 'tis well done by many, in several Books easie to be consulted. Your Sun and Light, and Moon and Stars, will grow dark, and the Clouds return after the Rain; one Infirmary following another, as a sign of approaching Night; as a warning that the Grave is ready for you, and you should be for it.

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You may reasonably expect, that the time will come, when you shall complain of darkness of Mind, and dry Affections, dull Senses, and faulty Memories; your Eyes dim, your Ears heavy, your Limbs feeble, and Feet lame, your Joints benumb'd, &c. You cannot ordinarily think of meeting a great Old Age, without some of these Inconveniencies: Though by a peculiar Providence, some are in a great measure exempted from them.

Now consider, what can support and comfort you in this Condition, but the Sense of God's Favour, and the Testimony of a good Conscience, and Reflections on a well-spent Life? To look back, how you have imploy'd your Time? What Good you have done

done in the World ? What Provision you have made for Eternity ? What Care you have taken for your Souls ? These Questions well answer'd, will be a great Support in Old Age ; and keep off much of the Weight of it ; and make many Years fit more easily upon you. 'Tis true, a good Conscience will not make a Man Immortal ; but the Quiet of our Minds and Spirits, will contribute much to the Strength of our Bodies, and enable us to bear the Infirmities of Old Age, and slide into the Grave more gently. But above all, it will give you Hope of finding Favour with God in another World ; and that being satisfied with long Life, God will shew you his Eternal Salvation.

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tion. And so I come to speak a few words to the * Aged.

First, Unto such who have liv'd a great many Years in the World, and are yet unfit to dye; who by reason of Ignorance, Impenitence, and a Wicked Life, are altogether unprepared to leave this World; having nothing but a miserable Portion to expect in the next. You lose the Crown, and Glory of Old Age; you are the old Servants of the Devil, and Slaves of Sin; you have long treasur'd up Wrath against the Day of Wrath; and are going

* See more largely, the Duty of the Aged, very well explain'd, and urg'd by Mr. Steel, in his Discourse of Old Age, 8°. 1688.

shortly

shortly to receive your Wages ; even double Condemnation. How many Years time have you misemploy'd, that you are now to reckon for ? What a shameful Bill may be made of the Expence of so long a time of Tryal, and of all the Talents you have had ? How can you look back without Amazement and Horrour ? Your lost Hours can never be recall'd, you must Repent speedily, or you are undone for ever. There is but a step between you and Death ; between you and Hell. Oh how near do you stand to the Judgment of God ? A young Sinner may perish shortly, and he may not ; for God may spare him, and give him Time and Space, and Grace to Repent : But you must be gone ; there are but a few Sands

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in your Glas; but a little Oyl in your Lamp, to preserve the Flame: Your active Time is gone, and yet your great Concern, and main Business for the Everlasting World, is now to begin. We read of *old Adulterers*, as an Agravation of their Sin. *Ezek. 23. 43.* And the Prophet *Jeremy* saith, *I am full of the Fury of the Lord, I will pour it forth upon the Aged, and him that's full of Days. Jer. 6. 11.*

Let us consider the sad Circumstances of those Persons, who wax old in Wickedness and Irreligion, and Contempt of God, how dead and disinclin'd their Spirits are to God, and Spiritual Matters; how every Day more unwilling to Repent; how they are hardened by a long Impunity; finding, that though they have sinned for Twenty

ty or Thirty Years or more, they are well still, and all the Preachers Sermons but harmless Thunder : We shall find that they still grow worse and worse. Be sure they that defer their Repentance to Old Age, their Repentance comes off the harder ; their Zeal is less, their Love is weak, and so is every thing they do. But though, there be less Hope of such, who have been all their Days under the Preaching of the Gospel, and not converted, till they are old, yet we can't limit the Grace of God : We dare not say their Case is hopeless. He that quickens the Dead, and raised *Lazarus* out of his Grave, can breathe on those dry Bones, and make them live. The Penitent Thief proves a late Repentance possible to be true. I

grant, except a Man be born again, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven ; but say not therefore, *How can a Man be born again when he is Old* : For, He that of Stones can raise up Children to Abraham, can sanctifie and renew an old Sinner, and make him a real Saint. Let such therefore awake, and bethink themselves, and seek his Grace. How many Years hath God waited on you ? How many Mercies, how many Afflictions, how many Warnings have you had ? How many Calls by his Word, Providence, and Spirit ? And now you are in view of the Grave, stooping to it ; Death begins to sieze you ; it hath siezed some Parts of you already ; it is manifest in your Eyes, in your Ears, Hands, and Legs ;
you

you can't see without Art, or hear without Difficulty, or walk without Pain ; you can't look into a Glafs, but you may see something of the Pourtraicture of Death in your Face, if you can see at all. *You are filled with Wrinkles, which is a witneß against you, and your Leanness rising up in you, bears witneß to the Face.* Job 16. 8. O think how near you are your Journeys-end, and lose not one Minute longer ! You are on the brink of Perdition, and therefore should speedily escape : Every Hour you delay, you'll be more unfit and indisposed : So much of your Time, Parts and Strength is gone already, you should use the remainder to the best Advantage. You have seen by your own Experience the Vanity of all Worldly Things,

and the Misery of a wicked Course, and may have many Things to help your Seriousness in this Age. You have no other Employment proper for you, but to be preparing for Death ; to be bidding adieu to the World ; to be casting up your Accounts ; to be fitting to abide in that State for ever, into which you are next to pass. Therefore awake, and give all Diligence. Certainly we can never set about this Work *too soon* ; but let none think 'tis *too late* to begin to be devoted to God, and live to him. It is always the best thing we can do ; and therefore we should at any time endeavour it ; and there are special Reasons for it in every Age. It is seasonable for the Youngest, but 'tis absolutely

lutely necessary for the Aged, to make all the haste possible.

Secondly, To you my Fathers, who are *old Disciples*, whose Hoary Head is found in the way of Righteousness, who have served the Lord from your Youth; Let me recommend a few Things.

First, Think how near you are to the Grave. You have but one Remove more to make, till you get thither: Your Warfare is almost accomplished. O be not strangers to the Thoughts of Death, thereby to quicken your Actual Preparation! Improve every Providence to that End, especially every Breach in your own Families by Death; “Particularly, as in the present Case of
“*Him*, who, though the deepest
“Mourner,

“ Mourner, does not mourn a-
“ lone. When the Companion
“ of your Life is gone before,
“ with whom you have pleasant-
“ ly, comfortably, and usefully
“ convers’d for so many Years :
“ Who was the Instrument of so
“ much of God’s Mercy to you,
“ with whom you have worship-
“ ed God so often in Publick and
“ Private, pray’d together, wept
“ together, and sang the Praises
“ of God together, and mourn’d
“ together under Difficulties and
“ Tryals, and help’d to bear one
“ another’s Burthens, &c. God
“ calls aloud to you for serious
“ Preparation to follow, that you
“ may be both ready and willing.

Secondly, Look back on your
past Lives, and consider the ma-
ny Instances of the Care, Wisdom,
Faith-

Faithfulness, and Goodness of God, to strengthen your Faith for the last Scene of your Life, Reflect humbly upon the Time you have lost; how much more Good you might have done; how many of your Talents you might have better improv'd; how many * Errors and Follies you have committed, and beg of God to forgive the Sins of your Youth: And yet look back with Thankfulness to God, that 'tis no worse; that Goodness and Mercy hath followed you all your Days. " Can
" you not say, Thou hast been
" my God from my Mothers
" Womb; my Praise shall be
" continually of thee: Thou hast

* Heu quam multa Pœnitenda occurrunt, diu vivendo! *Seneca.*

" been

“ been the Guide of my Youth,
“ and the Stay of my Riper Years :
“ Thou hast been my Dwelling-
“ place in all Generations : Thou
“ hast furnish’d me with Oppor-
“ tunities of doing and receiving
“ Good : Thou hast built up my
“ House, and made it to grow,
“ when thou pullest down others :
“ Thou hast been my Shield ,
“ Refuge, and Hiding-Place in
“ Times of Danger ; when Thou-
“ sands have fallen on the right-
“ hand, and on the left : Thou
“ hast been with me and mine
“ Abroad and at Home, by Sea
“ and Land, in one Country and
“ another ; and compassed me
“ about with thy Salvation. How
“ many Personal, how many Re-
“ lative Blessings ? How many
“ Temporal, how many Spiritual
“ Mer-

“ Mercies, have I had ? How
“ many Useful, Excellent, Ex-
“ emplary Christians, (Ministers
“ and Magistrates,) have I fol-
“ low’d to the Grave ; and seen
“ their Bodies laid in the Dust ?
“ And yet God has spar’d and
“ preserv’d me unto Old Age,
“ that I might be more ripe for
“ Heaven : And Oh that this may
“ be the Fruit of all, that I may
“ be so !

And with the Consideration of
what God has done for you, you
old Disciples should acquaint others
that are younger, with what you
your selves have found, and what
their Children, and Childrens
Children, will find to be true, as
to Religious and Civil Prudence.
In this especially, *Days should speak,*
and multitudes of Years teach Know-
ledge.

ledge. Job 33. 9. Admonish them to remember their Creator in the Days of their Youth ; charge them to be followers of you, so far as you have been followers of Christ, in hopes that among all your Children, or Grand-Children, there may not be one Son of Perdition, nor one Daughter of Belial. Thus David ; *Come ye Children hearken unto me, I will teach you the fear of the Lord.* Psal. 34. 11. Thus Solomon at large, *Prov. 4. 1, 2. Hear ye Children the Instruction of a Father, and attend to know Understanding.* Thus Timothy's Mother and Grand-Mother taught him. Tell them of the Snares of Satan, of the Deceitfulness of Sin, of the certain Disappointment, if we expect much from the World ; tho' it may be they will hardly now believe it.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Let the last part of your Lives abound in the Fruits of Righteousness; and be much imploy'd in serious Devotion. Let more Time be spent in Prayer and Meditation, and secret Converse with God. In what a Frame doth the Psalmist speak when he was Old. *Psal.* 71. 17, 18. * O God, thou hast taught me from my Youth; and hitherto have I declared thy wonderful Works. Now also when I am Old and Grey Headed, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy Strength unto this Generation, and thy Power to every one that is to come. Though in the Morning we must sow our Seed, yet in the Evening, we must not withhold our hand, we know not

* Which Holy Rivet was wont to repeat every Day in his Old Age.

which

which shall prosper most. Whether you may not please and honour God in your Old Age, by suitable Fruits of Righteousness, as much as ever heretofore in your Younger Years. *I have lost a world of time*, said the Learned *Salmasius* on his Death-Bed, *if I had One Year longer, I would spend it in reading David's Psalms, and Paul's Epistles. I repent of all my Life*, said another on his Death-Bed, *but that part I have spent in Communion with God, and in doing Good.*

O Pray much for your selves, and for your Children, and for Theirs after them, that none of them may be lost; that none of them may dishonour their Parentage, blemish their Family, break the Fetters of their Education, and cast off their Fathers God,
and

and their Mothers God. Methinks 'tis a Pleasant and Comfortable Passage, *Heb. 11. 9.* That *Abraham* dwelt in Tents with *Isaac* and *Jacob*; (That is, they all did so, though not in the same House,) and were all *Heirs of the same Promise*. Father, Son and Grand-Son; All Heirs of the same Promise; All Believers; All within the Bond of the Covenant; All pleasing God, and accepted of him. 'Tis a singular Mercy to be able to say, *Lord, I am thy Servant*; truly *I am thy Servant, the Son of thine Handmaid, the Son of thy Servant*. I hope my Father's God, my Grand-Father's and Grand-Mother's God, is my God, and shall be the God of mine.

H

And

B.M.

And here I can hardly forbear something more particular of the *Excellent Person Deceased*, who is now above our Praises. Her Character and History is not to be summ'd up in the few Syllables of a Funeral Ring; that she liv'd to such an Age, and dy'd at such a Time. I might say of her with strict Justice, upon my own knowledge, very many Things, Great and Praise-worthy; but that it was against her Desire; nor is it *His*, who hath a greater Power over me, than that comes to. There are Multitudes who knew her Example, who are Mourners for her Death, in City and in Country, besides Relations; Multitudes, who by her Charity were enabled to praise God: Who will tell one another

ther of this, and the other Particular, which I shall not name. And if any think that her dislike of a Funeral Commendation, do add to her Character, and really greaten it, I cannot help or gainsay that.

Let me urge this a little further upon *Elder Christians*, who have been for many Years planted in the House of the Lord, that they would bring forth Fruit in their Old Age. *Sirs*, Be not weary of Well-doing ; God is not weary of doing you Good ; he hath provided for you in Old Age, that your Youth should be renewed like the Eagles. God's Goodness to you doth not abate but increase. He may say to you as to old *Israel*, Isa. 46. 3, 4. You were born by me
H 2 from

from the Belly, and carried from the Womb ; even unto Old Age, I am he, and even to Hoary Hairs will I carry you. You have had a long Time to take deeper Root, and to bring forth riper and better Fruit than Others : and now you are preparing for a Remove ; within a near prospect of it ; you know it can't be long ; for Old Age is the next Condition to the Grave. 'Twas the Honour of *Thyatira*, that her *Last Works* were better than her *First* ; and of *Zacharias* and *Elizabeth*, both well stricken in Years, that they were both Righteous before God, walking in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameless. And of *Anna*, who was of a great Age, that she departed not from the Temple, but served

served God Day and Night. *Luke*
2. 36. They had need look to
this, who can't reasonably think
to be many Years short of the
Everlasting World; who have no
other Business now to mind, but
that they may finish their Course
with Joy; that they may have
fresh Supplies of Spiritual Life,
and suitable actings of Grace to
the very last; that their Breaches
may be repaired, their Backslid-
ings healed; that what is weak
may be strengthened, and what
is decayed may be recovered,
&c.

There is such a Thing as a
Spring in *Autumn*, a latter Spring;
and though it be inferiour to the
first, yet the Husbandman cannot
spare it; and 'tis reckon'd a sign

H 3 of

of barren Ground, if there be no Attempts to put forth afresh towards the end of the Year. God expects the like from Christians in their Old Age : Especially from such, who have made a great Appearance, and Profession of Religion in their Younger Years. 'Tis dreadful for any such to be Dead, and Cold, and Worldly, and Selfish, and Earthly-minded. Though the Fruit be somewhat different in Old Age from the former, yet that which is expected, is the Fruit of that Season ; Such as Spirituality, and Heavenly-mindedness, Mortification to the World, fitness to dye, and willingness to depart, and diligence to clear up your Evidences for Heaven, that you may be on sure Grounds for Eternity :

Eternity : These are Fruits fit for Elder Saints. Such Fruits in Old Age will shew, to the Glory of God, *that the Lord is Upright, that he is your Rock, and there is no Unrighteousness in him.*

If You should not be willing to dye, it can be less expected from younger Christians. You have seen so much of the Vanity and Vexation of the World, of the Falshood and Deceitfulness of Men, of the Divisions in the Church, of the Weaknesses of Good Men, and the Wickedness of Others, (and there is so little Prospect of any Thing better,) that it will be justly thought, that you should be willing and glad to be gone. Mr. Dod, in a dangerous Sicknes in his Old Age,

H 4

being

being told by his Physicians, that they had good Hopes of his Recovery ; replied, That the News pleased him no better, than if one should tell a Weather-beaten Mariner, who was putting into the Haven, that he must to Sea again, and conflict with more Storms.

Fourthly, Be Patient under the Infirmities and Weaknesses of Old Age. You have born the brunt of the Battle, and heat of the Day ; hold out a little longer. Give Glory to God by submitting to his Will. Don't mistake the Decays of Nature for Declensions in Grace ; and because your Natural Strength is abated, conclude therefore that God has forsaken you. But know that your
Esteem,

Esteem, and Judgment, and settled Bent of Heart may be (and I hope is) more for God, Holiness, and Heaven, than formerly; and your Disesteem of the World and Sin more than heretofore; tho' lively, vigorous Affections will decay with Age. Consider what this Body is, and how near it is to Dissolution; and that God hath promised never to leave nor forsake you. Therefore endeavour patiently to bear the Weaknesses and Infirmities of your present State. And Aged Persons should not think much of Infirmities, Languishings, and Decays, that may every Day bring them nearer to their long Home. Be thankful to God if they are tolerable; you can't expect

expect to be wholly exempted. And think a little, how many in their younger Years have more Sickness, and Weakness, and Bodily Indisposition, than many of you, even in old Age.

At last, Labour to live in the joyful Expectation of the Heavenly Glory. You shall shortly be with Christ, and with Millions of his Servants, many of them you have known, and multitudes more whom you never saw, will then be as dear to you, as if you had known them. What a joyful Meeting will this be with Christ and them! 'Tis true we know not the Particulars of our blessed State, in the Better, Upper World, but we trust in Christ, who hath promised we shall be
with

with him. And he knows what's the Place, State and Company, and where we shall be; and what we shall enjoy and do. We leave it to him; he is Wise, and Kind, and Faithful. O think with your selves, that your Salvation is now nearer than when at first you believ'd. We that are Younger, may have many Difficulties and Conflicts, before we get through the World; but *you* are near your Reward. As old Soldiers, who have been long in Service, expect the next Place of Preferment; so old Disciples are near to the Heavenly Glory: The next Place in Heaven it may be is for *you*, or *you*, of all the Heirs of Salvation in this Assembly. Let your thankful, joyful Hopes,
and

and fervent Desires to be with Christ, be part of your Testimony to the Faithfulness of God, and the Truth of his Word; to convince Observers, that Religion is a Reality, and that a holy Life is Best, that hath so Desirable, and Comfortable an End. But whether the Younger, or Elder of us shall be call'd *first*, is only known to Him who knoweth all Things. May God of his Infinite Mercy, make us *Ready*, and then *Willing*, to follow Those, who by Faith and Patience are gone to inherit the Promises! *Amen.*

F I N I S.

